Book Review - *Tim Harle*

Management and the Gospel:

Luke's Radical Message for the First and Twenty-First Centuries

By Bruno Dyck

Turning to the last page first is not normally recommended when reading crime novels. Readers of this book, however, may well find it a helpful place to begin. In a Final Thoughts section, the author writes that "this book does not purport to argue that a first-century management lens provides the only way or the best way to interpret the Gospel of Luke" (p.199). That is an important qualification, as a great deal of the book revolves around what might be termed a management hermeneutic.

Returning to a conventional starting point, Dyck introduces his key themes clearly. "It turns out that management is a dominant theme in the Gospel, that its message is consistently countercultural, and that Luke contains a four-phase process model to help readers implement change" (p.3). While the countercultural message – *Magnificat*, Good Samaritan – is common in biblical studies, the management theme and process model may come as a surprise. Indeed, the change process provides the structure for the four core parts of the book: problem recognition, action response, changed way of seeing, institutional change.

Mention of crime novels raises the question of to which genre this book belongs. Bruno Dyck is a Professor at the University of Manitoba's School of Business, and has previously written for an academic management audience. But he has also written about theology and Catholic social thought. His brave attempt to engage the worlds of management thought and biblical scholarship must surely be welcomed, even if such an approach runs the risk of satisfying neither constituency.

Dyck begins by introducing a threefold first-century management lens. The first element consists of managing relationships within organisations, typified by the Greek word *oikonomia*, or household management. The second element is managing money: here Aristotle's distinction between the natural and the acquisitive is used to good effect. The third element is the managing of relationships

between organisations, especially reflecting a patron-client affiliation. Dyck summarises succinctly, "Whereas today some people may be keen to separate 'business' from the holy affairs of the 'church', such a separation was impossible in the first century" (p.19).

This first-century management lens underpins Dyck's first challenge to conventional interpretations of Luke's gospel. As part of the Problem Recognition phase of his fourfold process, he devotes a chapter each to the parables of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16.1-8) and Ten Pounds (Luke 19.12-27). The former provides an example of countercultural thinking according to the three elements of the lens: the manager elevates the roles of slaves in the household economy, promotes sustenance (as opposed to acquisitive) economics, and seeks to move away from a patron-client relationship towards benefaction (providing benefits without strings attached).

The second phase of Dyck's fourfold process, Action Response, is represented by chapters exploring passages in Luke in the light of the threefold management lens. Dyck finds a 'truly remarkable' consistency – for example, relating to the power of women or dignity of slaves – which stands in 'stark contrast' to first-century norms. He also finds a preference for sustenance economics over acquisition, laid out in a table examining passages in Luke's gospel which do or do not explicitly refer to the 'rich'.

The third part of the book, exemplifying the New Way of Seeing, examines Lucan passages relating to the Kingdom of God, salvation, and the Holy Spirit. Having considered a series of opposites – future or present, spiritual or earthly, passive or active, for members or everyone – Dyck writes that "A popular twenty-first century understanding of the [Kingdom of God] would lean toward the first interpretation along each of these four dimensions" (p.86). This is an example of where his quest